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Some Factors to Consider in Comparing Cullinet to MSA for Support to CLAS

There are a multiplicity of factors that ought to go into the decision as to what the Agency will do with regard to the CLAS project. There is a presumption among many people that the basic decision is between the integrated systems offered by Cullinet and MSA, but, in fact, there are other options available such as remaining with ICS and CONIF until a more capable system is developed by another vendor -- or building a new system in-house.

The CLAS team, however, has already done an evaluation of the currently available packages developed by Cullinet and MSA and has recently reviewed the current and near-term plans of both companies regarding their financial and logistic information support systems.

The following thoughts are presented for whatever value they might have to the people who are charged with the responsibility of determining what the Agency should do at this time.

Important considerations in a decision regarding <u>any</u> commercial software package include:

Functionality of the design, i.e. does the package do what needs to be done?

Availability: What's ready now and what is the schedule for future enhancements?

Cost: This factor includes not only the price of the package and associated contractor support but also the investment the user has to make in time and materials.

Contractor Support: What is the quality of the contractor assistance and is it timely? This support comes in two forms, functional and technical and includes training.

Documentation: Are all the procedures clearly explained and are the programs themselves described sufficiently so that any required user modification is straightforward?

Ease of Use: This is a subjective judgment but can play a critical part in system effectiveness.

Efficiency and/or (for sets of packages) Degree of Integration: This is largely a technical judgment, however, the use of common terms and concepts across packages is important to the user. Capability for growth should also be considered here.

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In addition to the factors listed above, there are several others that are relevant to the specific case of CLAS, namely:

Outlook for the Company: While it is true that we can hardly be expected to serve as business analysts, we cannot totally ignore the recent downturn in the fortunes of Cullinet, despite the assurances of John Cullinane.

Single vs. Multiple Vendor: There are arguments for both sides here -- we simply have to take them into account.

Plans for a Corporate Data Base: If IDMS/R is to be the Agency's DBMS for the next ten years, then Cullinet probably has an edge over MSA in terms of applications software that is generally comparable in performance.

On the subject of auditability, I have not done enough detailed study to have a firm opinion yet. On what I have seen thus far, however, I would give the edge to Cullinet. In my view, auditability should not be a heavily weighted factor for this decision.

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